

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN,

IN THE

B A I L O F L I N C O L N.

“ There are not wanting, however, some amongst us, who are for shortening these Re-
“ searches into Truth ; and tell us, it is enough without any Thing farther, if we
“ only know, that such a Thing is *written*: In which Opinion, it may be worth while
“ to observe, they seem to differ a good deal from St. *Philip* ; who, upon seeing a
“ Person with a Bible in his Hand, was not content with merely asking him, what
“ he saw written there ; but made this farther Enquiry, *Understandest thou what thou*
“ *readest* ? And how this Business of *Understanding* is to be accomplished, without
“ the Act of Reasoning, without inquiring by whom any Thing was written ; on
“ what Occasion ; with what probable Design ; how it agrees with other Parts of
“ Scripture ; and possibly also, how consonant it is to our own Notions of God, and
“ the Relation we stand in to him, is, I own, a Point far above my Comprehension.
“ One would not suppose, that these Men thought Scripture false ; but surely they
“ talk as if they did : For what Harm can Inquiries about it do, if it be true ? It
“ is the Nature of all Truth to love the Light ; of Error to avoid it. The one
“ acquires fresh Charms by being more clearly seen ; and the Uglinefs of the other
“ can no otherwise be fully detected, than by being brought into public View.
“ They would do well to tell us, before they take the Use of our Reason away, what
“ Difference there is between a false Religion, and a true One falsely understood.”

*A new Estimate of Manners and Principles, printed at
Cambridge, 1760. Part II. Chap. 10.*

8.

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN,
IN THE
B A I L O F L I N C O L N,
AT THE
V I S I T A T I O N
OF THE
A R C H D E A C O N O F L I N C O L N,
ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 1777.

BY JOHN DISNEY, D. D.
RECTOR OF PANTON AND VICAR OF SWINDERBY,
IN LINCOLNSHIRE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, N^o 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.
MDCC LXXVII.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN

IN THE

CHURCH OF LINCOLN

AT THE

VISITATION

OF THE

ARCHDEACON OF LINCOLN

ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 1777.

By JOHN DISNEY, D.D.

RECTOR OF PANTON, VICAR OF SPINDLEBY,
IN LINCOLNSHIRE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. JOHNSON, at the Green-Lane Press,
in Pall-mal.

[v]

T O

THE REVEREND THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY of LINCOLN.

REVEREND BRETHERN,

THE following Discourse is offered to YOUR favourable Acceptance from the Press, in Testimony of the Preacher's Respect for the Clergy of a District, among whom he is happy to number himself. Its Contents are a few plain and undisguised Thoughts on a Subject of the greatest Importance to himself, and, in his Opinion, to all who like himself have undertaken the Office of dispensing the Word of God to a Christian and Protestant People.

It is the Substance of a Plea for a further Reformation in the established Church of *England*, in those Instances more especially, where Restraints seem to be laid upon the Exercise of our Common Rights as Christians and Protestants; Restraints which are by no Means consistent (at least in the Preacher's Opinion) with the Principles on which the Protestant Reformation arose, and on which only it can be justified.

Nor can he possibly persuade himself that there is one among you, his respectable Brethren of the Clergy, who will not so far agree with him as to acknowledge, that not only the free Enjoyment of his Liberty,
but

but the full Exercise of his Function, according to his own Persuasion, are Privileges which no Minister of God's Word can give up in Compliment to any Man, or any Body of Men, while he values himself on the Principles as well as the Profession of the Protestant Religion.

And being thus persuaded of you, he hopes he shall be readily excused for holding forth the Subject in this general View, upon the Consideration, that while he is asserting this Liberty to himself, and those who are like-minded, he is likewise pleading that the same Privilege may be secured to those from whom it is perhaps his Misfortune to differ in Matters of less Importance to the common Cause.

The common Principle (acknowledged even by the Authority that lays upon us the Restraints above-mentioned) is, that the Scriptures are our only Rule of Faith and Practice, which have not only the Sanction of Christ and his Apostles as a Divine Revelation, majestic indeed, and awful in the Circumstances of its Promulgation by the Son of God, but at the same Time accommodated in its Contents to the Understandings, the Wants, and dearest Interests of Mankind, even of those of the meanest Capacity.

But what the Clearness of Evidence compels Men to confess, with Respect to the general Tenor of what is proposed to them, their Prejudices, and some Circumstances of their present Situation, prevail with them too often to overlook in their Practice, and sometimes to form Misconceptions, both of the Nature and End of the Christian Dispensation, and by Consequence of the Means by which its blessed Author intended it should be propagated.

Obvious as this Observation might be, few perhaps have been struck with it in former Times; nor has it been, till of late, laid before the World with sufficient Freedom, what pernicious Tendency the

the Deference paid to human Authority in Matters of Religion, has had towards defacing the Beauty, and corrupting the Purity of that gracious Plan of Salvation by which all the Families of the Earth were intended to be blessed.

It is no Argument against the Importance of the Remonstrances made on this Head, that they have been treated with Neglect, not to say contemptuous and malevolent Opposition. The Preacher has been long convinced that they should never be laid aside, till they have produced some good Effect; and, under this Conviction, whenever he shall be called upon to bear his Testimony in the Cause of Christian Liberty, he shall think it his Duty that it should be made as public as may be; and he hopes he shall need no other Apology for communicating the Sentiments delivered in the following Discourse by the Means of the Press. He was called upon, *according to the Custom of the Jurisdiction*, to preach before his Brethren on a public Occasion, and he knows but of one Individual, among his Hearers, who affected to have forgotten the Subject of the Controversy. The Writer scruples not to declare, that his Convictions have not been unattended with Sacrifices of worldly Interest and Profit. Herein, however, he makes not his Boast, but offers this Circumstance only as an Evidence of his earnest Desire to profess and preach Christ in all Sincerity and Truth; and wherever that appears, the Scoffs and Sneers of bigotted and jealous Malevolence will have no other Effect with serious and considerate Men, than to produce a Detestation of the Profligacy of that Spirit, which can treat a Subject of the first Importance to Religion with so indecent a Levity.

If it should be said, or suggested by any one, that after the late Agitation of the Question in public Controversy, and a solemn Appeal to the Legislature, the Subject had laid dormant, and should not be revived without good Reason; be that good Reason, the great Importance
of

of it. To say that the Policy of the Times makes such Revival unreasonable, would be saying, that there are Seasons when the Advancement of the Kingdom of Christ should be postponed to the Interests of the Kingdoms of this World. If the Subject should be thought to be exhausted, the Answer is, that till the Relief solicited is granted, the Subject can never be exhausted, especially as it is so well known that Oppressions and Impositions of all Kinds grow still more grievous by Repetition and Continuance, and which some certain Appearances give us Apprehensions, may be unhappily the Case in this, as it has been in other Instances.

It becomes us, however, to form better Hopes of those from whom Relief is only to be had; but whatever may be the Event, the Preacher pledges himself, never to withhold his Mite towards the Accomplishment of what is so devoutly to be wished by all honest and conscientious Men. And though AFTER THE WAY WHICH SOME CALL HERESY, HE MAY WORSHIP THE GOD OF HIS FATHERS, he is only answerable to Almighty God for his Faith, and trusts that none of his Errors will be found to be taken up without Examination, or maintained without Conviction. And for the Rest, it may suffice to declare his full Belief in the Revelation of Jesus, and in the Catholic Principle of unlimited Charity:—Wishing to shew himself,

Gentlemen,

on all Occasions,

June 2, 1777.

Your Brother and Servant in Christ,

John Disney.

ROMANS, THE XIVth CHAPTER, THE LATTER PART
OF THE 5th VERSE.

—LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN
HIS OWN MIND.

WE here read the great Apostolic Rule or Direction of Candor and Charity in our Sentiments; and the Foundation of mutual Meekness and Moderation towards each other, in Respect of the Differences and Disagreements in our religious Opinions—Which is thus introduced—HIM THAT IS WEAK IN THE FAITH RECEIVE YOU, BUT NOT TO DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS. FOR ONE BELIEVETH THAT HE MAY EAT ALL THINGS: ANOTHER WHO IS WEAK, EATETH HERBS. LET NOT HIM THAT EATETH, DESPISE HIM THAT EATETH NOT: AND LET NOT HIM WHICH EATETH NOT, JUDGE HIM THAT EATETH: FOR GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM *. Again, ONE MAN ESTEEMETH ONE DAY ABOVE ANOTHER; ANOTHER ESTEEMETH EVERY DAY ALIKE. And the Apostle then adds, with a Dignity and decisive Emphasis, LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND.

* Rom. xiv. 1—3.

There have not, however, been wanting, amidst the Variety of Interpreters, some who have industriously laboured to prove that this PERSUASION was intended to be confined to Things called indifferent. But it may be remarked, once for all, that where there is a Law, Transgression cannot be indifferent, even in Things not otherwise material; no such Limitation appears upon the Face of the Apostle's Reasoning, or is fairly deducible from it, nor could it be made consistent with any Part of his Writings.

And in Behalf of the *free Exercise* of our own Judgment, formed in Consequence of such Persuasion, St. Paul writes, WHO ART THOU THAT JUDGEST ANOTHER MAN'S SERVANT? TO HIS OWN MASTER HE STANDETH OR FALLETH: And that we may have further Confidence in such our Liberty and our Duty, he goes on to say, YEA, HE SHALL BE HOLDEN UP: FOR GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE HIM STAND*. Nor does he omit affectionately to caution and exhort us NOT TO PUT A STUMBLING-BLOCK, OR AN OCCASION TO FALL IN OUR BROTHER'S WAY†: And this with a View, as is most probable, to the Declaration of Christ, that IT MUST NEEDS BE THAT OFFENCES COME: BUT WO TO THAT MAN BY WHOM THE OFFENCE COMETH‡.

In the Account which Paul gives the *Athenians* of his own Conversion, and in his Speech before *Agrippa*, he prefaces the History with the ingenuous Avowal of his having been of the Sect of the Pharisees§—he recites his having persecuted the Christians||, and even confesses the Share he had in the Murder of *Stephen*** . And these, when before *Agrippa*, he very justly reckons among those Things which he did CONTRARY TO THE NAME OF JESUS OF NAZARETH††. So far the general Direction in my Text is approved by

* Rom. xiv. 4. † Rom. xiv. 13. ‡ Matt. xviii. 7. § Acts xxiii. 6. xxvi 5.
|| Acts xxii. 4. xxvi. 10. ** Acts xxii. 20. †† Acts xxvi. 9.

the Apostle's Confession in Regard to his own Conduct. For, as Persecution implies Compulsion, so Persuasion implies previous Examination, and the voluntary Act of the Mind. Nor should it be unobserved that Persuasion in all Cases precedes willing Obedience, and therefore belongs to the Man himself; Forbearance of Judgment is the Duty of others.

As Fellow-disciples and Followers of our common Master, we have many Obligations to mutual Indulgence and Charity. But *St. Paul*, in the Passage before us, it is submitted, extends his Exhortation to a tolerating Spirit towards the Gentile, as well as the Jewish Converts; or, to speak in a Language adapted to our own Day, and to bring the divine Precept into a suitable Application to our own Cases—Candor and Charity, Meekness and Moderation, to which his Precept evidently has especial Respect, are to be extended to all the human Race, whether they reject the Glad-tidings of our Messiah, or receiving them, should in some Degree corrupt the Word of God, **AND MAKE IT OF NONE EFFECT, THROUGH THEIR TRADITION ***.

An Exhortation in the written Word of the infallible God will never be found inconsistent with itself, or contradictory to any of the component Parts, or the general Principle of the Whole; and if of moral Obligation will never be found limited or partial in its Extent.

Now, when we consider this Exhortation before us, **LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND**, as it respects an independent Individual, we must necessarily presuppose the Duty of fair and full Enquiry, whether Things are so or no. And when we find such Individual, a Member of a Christian Society, we must take in the reciprocal Duty of the Rulers of the People, whether the Helm of

* Mark vii. 13.

Government is guided by one or by many, by the Civil Magistrate, or a Sovereign Pontiff.

It has, however, been the unhappy Fate of Christianity, under its several Modes of public Teaching and Professing, to be restrained in its Progress and cramped in its benevolent Operations upon the human Mind. From the End of the third to the fifteenth Century of the Christian *Æra*, the Gospel of the blessed Jesus was never suffered to appear in its native Dress, or in that amiable Light in which its great Author and his Apostles left it, but was viewed and explained through the thick and deceitful Medium of Establishments of *human* Formularies of *religious* Faith and Doctrine. And during the two last Centuries, as also in that in which we now live, the Establishment of human Systems has not a little darkened those Lights which should have appeared in the World in their original Lustre, and has overshadowed the Labors even of our most able and successful Inquirers, and most judicious Expositors.

In the Constitution of such human Establishments, we may, almost universally, discern the Want of liberal Examination; and, even in Protestant Communions, an inconsistent Departure from our only defensible Ground, and a more tenacious Adherence to Constructions and Interpretations of Scripture, espoused by the Leaders of Sects and Parties, than to the Scriptures themselves, the only avowed Test of our religious Opinions *.

Upon

* “ Who are they that we must call REFORMERS, and by the Opinions of which of
 “ them must we abide? Did not *Calvin* see farther than *Luther*, or do you rest where
 “ *Luther* did, and admit the Doctrine of Consubstantiation? Would you exactly follow
 “ the Steps of *Calvin*; then you must use Sports on the Lord’s Day, and instead of
 “ writing against, burn me at the Stake, as he did *Servetus*. If the Reformers differed
 “ from one another, why may not we differ from them all? You will hardly maintain
 “ their

Upon what other Pretence can a Belief of the Holy Scriptures be rejected, as an inadequate Bond of Union among fellow Christians, than upon that of their declared Insufficiency? What avail one or more general Declarations, confronted by the Remainder of the System? And when the Doctrine of such Insufficiency is once admitted, with what Arguments are the Assailants and Adversaries of that FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS * to be silenced and convinced? It will be of little Avail to object to the Additions to the Scriptures, and the Requisition of implicit Faith in the Decisions of the holy See, when it may be replied to the Objector, that by imposing Interpretations and Conceits of human Device, and establishing Consent to these, as the Terms of Admission to our Ministry, we do the same Thing under another Name †. The supposed Truth

“ their Inspiration. What Authority have you to suppose, that the divine Being con-
 “ fined the Reformation to that particular Age? Is it not much more probable, that it
 “ was only begun then, and that it is our Duty to carry it on?” Dr. Priestley’s *Con-*
siderations on Differences of Opinion among Christians, with a Letter to Mr. Venn. 1769.
 p. 53.—Wicliff acknowledged seven Sacraments, though he renounced Transubstan-
 tiation. See Gilpin’s *Lives of Wicliff*, &c. p. 41—43. and 63, 64.—Henry VIII. the no-
 minal Father of the Reformation, believed all the Doctrines of the Church of Rome,
 save the Pope’s Supremacy. *Granger’s Biog. History*, Vol. i. p. 77.

* Jude 3. † With as great Truth as Wit, it has been observed by that excellent
 Prelate, Bishop Benjamin Hoadly, in his Dedication to Pope Clement XI. prefixed to
 Sir R. Steele’s *Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion* (Vol. I. p. 535. of
 the Bishop’s Works in Folio) “ That You cannot err in any Thing you determine, and
 “ We never do: That is, in other Words, that you are infallible, and we always in the
 “ right. We cannot but esteem the Advantage to be exceedingly on our Side, in this
 “ Case, because we have all the Benefits of *Infallibility*, without the Absurdity of pre-
 “ tending to it; and without the uneasy Task of maintaining a Point so shocking to
 “ the Understanding of Mankind. And you must pardon us, if we cannot help think-
 “ ing it to be as great and as glorious a Privilege in us, to be always in the right,
 “ without the Pretence to Infallibility, as it can be in you to be always in the wrong
 “ with it.” This Observation of Bishop Hoadly’s is noticed by the venerable and
 learned Dr. Robertson (formerly Rector and Vicar of Ravilly, in the Diocese of Leighlin,
 in Ireland) in his *Attempt to explain the Words, Reason, Substance, &c.* (3d Edit. 1767.

Truth or Falsehood of these Impositions are no Way concerned in the Question, for that Authority which hath Power to impose, will assume also the Right to interpret.

If in Abatement of the Force of this Argument, it should be insisted, in Behalf of our Church, that such Imposition is confined to the Clergy, we have returned upon us, the Absurdity of compelling the Clergy to preach, what we consider the People under no Obligation to believe. How aptly then would the Close of *St. Paul's* Reasoning in Proof of the important Doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ be applied to our Shame and Confusion, for might not our Adversary say, THEN IS YOUR PREACHING VAIN, AND THEN IS THEIR FAITH ALSO VAIN *.

It has been a favorite Argument, in the Mouths of some Controversialists, that "all Societies must have some Bond or Centre of Union, and that a Summary of certain Matters both of Faith and Doctrine is necessary and lawful in every Christian Society, as a Guard and Bulwark against Misinterpretation of Scripture, seeing that the wildest Fanatic calls Scripture to his Proof †."

p. 238.) where also he makes the following Observation, "The Clergy of the Church of *Rome* subscribe to XXIV Articles of Religion; the Clergy of the Church of *England*, as more Orthodox, subscribe to XXXIX."

* 1 Cor. xv. 14. † The Writer who seems to venture the most upon the Success of this Figment is Archdeacon *Balguy*, whose own Words are, "It is scarce possible to name or to invent an Opinion more absurd in itself, or more hurtful to Society, or more fatal to the Cause of Virtue and Piety, than many of those which have actually been maintained by Men, who called themselves Christians." Charge in 1772. p. 10. There are some Sentiments and Arguments of Bishop *Hoadly's* in his *Common Rights of Subjects*, Chap. ii. §. 6. (Vol. II. p. 732. of his Works) well deserving the Perusal of Dr. *Balguy*, and which must have escaped his Notice while he was forming his *present Persuasion*.

That

That all Societies both *should* and *must* have some Bond or Centre of Union, shall be granted in the fullest Extent of the Maintainer's Wishes. And as we are agreed in acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the Head of the Christian Society, we have none other to whom we can look up, or refer ourselves for lawful Directions relating to such Bond of Union*.

The furthest that our Enquiries into the Conduct of Christ himself will carry us, is the Satisfaction he expressed at *Peter's* Answer to his Question, WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? THOU ART CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, returned Peter. AND JESUS ANSWERED, AND SAID UNTO HIM, BLESSED ART THOU SIMON BARJONA: FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HATH NOT REVEALED IT UNTO THEE, BUT MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. AND I SAY ALSO UNTO THEE, THAT THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT†. In more familiar Language, this Confession or Belief in me as the Christ, the Son of God; is full Proof of Faith in me as the promised Messiah and Mediator of a better Covenant.

St. Paul, in an Address to the Jews, in all the glowing Warmth of Affection for their best Interest, declares THE WORD OF FAITH WHICH HE PREACHED, WAS, THAT IF THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS, AND SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE

* This Bond of Union, a favorite Idea in the Writings of the worthy Dean of Gloucester, seems to be even at this Day, and in our own Church, a vague and unsettled Expression, in Respect to what, properly speaking, is understood by that Term, and should operate as such. Thus much may be collected from an excellent Letter to Sir William Meredith, upon the Subject of Subscription, &c. 4to printed for J. Swan, 1772.

† Matt. xvi. 15—18.

HEART, THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED*.

These then are Summaries of Confessions which satisfied the Demands of Christ and Paul, the firm Belief of which (a correspondent Conformity to their Precepts supposed) is declared to be the Foundation of the Christian Church, and to give Men a full Assurance of Salvation. To this Confession of Faith in Christ, might be joined a Declaration of the Sufficiency of the Scriptures, as an Out-work placed against the Incroachments and Spread of the grand Apostacy of Christian Rome; and, as on the one Hand the Authority of Man should be bounded by this Barrier, so on the other, the Wit of Man cannot suggest or devise a more effectual Bond of Union for Christians and Protestants.

When it is urged that some Summary is necessary and useful for the Instruction and Direction of such Subscriber, I would be understood to object, not to the Utility of any proper and judicious Assistances, so far as may enable Enquirers to form a Judgment or Persuasion for themselves, but to the Imposition of them as Terms of Communion, precluding a free and impartial Judgment by a peremptory dogmatic Determination. In that Light, I cannot forbear to consider them as derogatory to the Credit and supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures. Nor need I to remark, in Aid of my Argu-

* Rom. x. 8, 9. Consult also Acts xvii. 2, 3. where Paul is related to have *reasoned* with the Jews of Thessalonica, *out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the Dead; and that Jesus whom he preached unto them, was Christ.* See also John xi. 25—27. where Jesus declares the Sufficiency of *Martha's Faith*, that he was *the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the World;* and ver. 40—44 confirm it by the Resurrection of *Lazarus* her Brother. Compare also 1 John iv. 14, 15.—Let now the Advocates for a *Form of sound Words*, find other than these, as sufficient Evidences of a Christian's Faith, warranted by Christ; and he will have some Reason to plume himself on his Discovery.

ment, that all *necessary* Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice are clearly revealed, so far as relates to the Instruction of the Poor (or illiterate) who were to HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED UNTO THEM *. That Gospel, to which may be applied the Direction given to *Habakkuk* in Respect to a Vision, MAKE IT PLAIN UPON TABLES, THAT HE MAY RUN THAT READETH †. The Measure then of necessary Information and Intelligence could not be lessened by the Removal of certain modern Confessions, or Symbols of certain Churches.

That Fanatics may appeal to the Scriptures in Proof of their Opinions, is very possible; some Writers have gone further, and said, that every religious Opinion has its Martyr; but it is certain that there is as much Disagreement among us with Respect to the Explications of our established Formularies, as could possibly have been in the Interpretations of those Scriptures from whence certain Advocates maintain them to have been taken. Nor is this Disagreement in Opinion confined to two opposite Parties, but multiplied into as many as there are distinct Propositions contained in those Formularies ‡. Such, indeed, is the Temper and Constitution of the human Mind, that this Diversity of Opinions is unavoidable, insomuch, that it would be no less wild a Project to attempt to regulate the Stature of all Mankind by one Standard, or to reduce their Countenances to one Mould or Fashion, and at the same Time preserve the human Form and Figure entire, as to make them of one Mind; and in some Instances

* Luke iv. 18. vii. 22. † Hab. ii. 2. ‡ " For these same Articles are
 " called only Thirty-nine, yet no Man must from hence imagine, that he has only
 " Thirty-nine Propositions to deal with; he will find four or five Times that Number,
 " though bound up indeed into so many Bundles. The second Article alone contains
 " thirteen very substantial Propositions; the seventeenth, twelve; the twenty-fifth as
 " many. How many are included in the thirty-fifth it is impossible to say, as it implies
 " our Assent to two whole Books, one of which is now scarcely extant, and the other
 " appears to want considerable Elucidations, before it can be *rightly understood of the*
 " *People.*" See the learned Bishop Law's *Considerations on the Propriety of requiring a Sub-*
scription to Articles of Faith. 2d Edit. 1774. p. 6.

it would be the less Injury of the two to disfigure or maim the Body of a Man to bring it to a certain Standard of Bulk or Stature, as to torture and wrest his mental Faculties to a Conformity with certain prescribed Theories in Matters of the speculative Kind. Such Differences of Opinion, though sometimes, alas ! uncandidly maintained and uncharitably conducted, promote Enquiry, and all Enquiry is favorable to the Investigation of Truth and the Rejection of Error, and goes a great Way towards giving ample Satisfaction to a thinking Christian, who would gladly be able to GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH HIM A REASON OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN HIM *, and to give an Account of the Faith that is required of him to profess †.

The intemperate Zeal which we may not unfrequently observe in polemic Writers, owes not its Spirit to that Gospel which, with much good Meaning, it aims to defend, but to the Genius of that System, which directs the Force and Scope of the Writer's Arguments to the Terms of some human Composition, and by that Means, often ends in creating an irreconcilable Variance between the same Person and himself, in the twofold Character of Subscriber and Writer. This has been done in more than an hundred Instances among our most able, as well as dignified Expositors of the present Age. And this is a Difficulty, which will more frequently embarrass future Defenders of our common Christianity, in Proportion as our Knowledge is increased. But surely we may hope that the Dogmata of dark and ignorant Ages, will not for ever hide from us the Light of the Gospel, nor will the pure Milk of the Word be long withheld from those whose first Duty it is to give it to others ? Every Branch of Philo-

* 1 Pet. iii. 15. † If this Question should yet be judged controvertible, the Reader may promise himself very considerable Satisfaction from the Perusal of an excellent " prefatory Discourse, containing some Thoughts on the Use and Importance " of Theological Controversy."—Prefixed to the second Edition of an *Historical View of the Controversy concerning an intermediate State*, printed for Wheble 1772. 8vo.

sophy has undergone a Variety of Changes, and received considerable Improvements within that Compass of Time to which I refer; nor has the Knowledge of Scripture received less Acquisitions. As a Science, it has had considerable Assistance from the united and successive Labours of the Learned, and the Addition of much collateral Knowledge, such for Instance, among others, as has been gathered from the Testimony of certain learned and inquisitive Travellers into the Eastern World *, who by accurate Disquisitions into the Customs and Manners of the Ancients, as well before, as after the Birth of Christ, have happily illustrated many Particulars in the sacred Writings, which had occasioned no little Perplexity among former Commentators. Nor is it entirely paradoxical to say, that even the Writings of Unbelievers have, though undesignedly on their Part, been of great Service to the Cause of Christianity, by exciting the Spirit of Examination in the Defenders of it, which has given Occasion to many valuable Discoveries in Behalf of Revelation. Nor has a rational Knowledge of our Bible been improved and increased among us, by any Thing, more than the Observance of that Canon of Scripture Criticism laid down by the immortal *Locke*,—of making the Scriptures thier own Interpreters †.

When,

* See an excellent Work intituled *Observations on divers Passages of Scripture collected from Books of Voyages and Travels into the East*, by Mr. Harmer, 2 Vol.

† See his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, and his *two Vindications* of it. “*Wicliff*,” also says his elegant Biographer, Mr. *Gilpin* (2d Edit. 1776. p. 4. and 4.) “seems to have chalked out for himself a simpler Path. He took the naked Text of Scripture into his Hands, and became his own Annotator. The Writings of the Schoolmen, he soon found, were calculated only to make Sectaries, the Bible alone to make a rational Christian.”—“The Day will come, I hope, said *Wicliff* (Ib. p. 63.) when Men will be wise enough to shake from their Necks the Dominion of human Ordinances; and disdain Submission to any ecclesiastical Injunctions, but such as are plainly authorized by the Word of God.”—Lord *Cobham*, concluding his Account of his Faith, says, “Finally, my Faith is, that God will ask no more of a Christian in this

When, exclusive of the Consideration of any Scriptural Grounds for the Institution of *human* Formularies of *religious* Faith and Doctrine, we are told of their Utility and Expedience in other Respects, it is not easy to see the Force of the Argument. To conclude that such supposed Utility and Expedience were intended to be referred to the Emoluments and Interests annexed to our several Stations, would be to harbor uncharitable and disparaging Sentiments of the Proposers, and argue almost as malevolent a Mind in the Person who should give it Credit, as it would doubtless argue a profligate Avarice in the Person who should advance it. It would be ascribing to them the Spirit of Demetrius, who had the Assurance to proclaim, that BY HIS CRAFT, or Employment, HE and his fellow Craftsmen HAD THEIR WEALTH, and joining in the Cry against *Paul*, GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS *. For this Idea then we will substitute a more candid one, and suppose that such Utility and Expedience are referred to the spiritual Interests of the Body of Christians, or in other Words, to the true Interests of Christianity.

But here is immediately suggested, in Behalf of the Reverse of this Plea, one unanswerable Truth. The uniform and concurrent Experience of all Ages since Christianity was first connected or taken into Alliance with the Civil Power, declares against both this Utility and Expedience. I do not confine myself to the latter Periods of our own Church History, for the Fact is equally evident in a Retrospect to former Ages, and in every Christian Church. The very presumptive Argument carries on its Face the Supposition of the less Utility of the Christian Scriptures to the Doctrines and Explications of Men. If it is urged that it promotes *Consent touching true Religion*, I not only

“ Life, than to obey the Precepts of his blessed Law. If any Prelate of the Church requireth more, or any other Kind of Obedience, he contemneth Christ, exalteth himself above God, and becometh plainly Antichrist.” Ib. p. 121.

* Acts xix. 24—28, &c.

deny

deny the *Fact* from Experience, but the *Possibility* of it from the Nature of the Thing itself: and will venture to observe, that it is *human* Formularies of religious Faith and Doctrine established in Christian and Protestant Countries, which has caused numberless Inconveniencies to the Professors of true Religion. And might not Instances be brought of Writers in our own Church, who to accommodate themselves and their Works to the reigning System, have been obliged to misrepresent the genuine Doctrines of the Gospel, affording thereby Triumphs to their Adversaries of different Denominations, and Matter of Doubt, Perplexity, and Offence to many of their own Communion, who might be otherwise desirous to edify by their Labors?

These Expedients then not only fail of securing an Uniformity of Opinion, but even in securing an Uniformity of Profession. Each ingenuous Enquirer abounds in his own Sense, and it is no more unusual to see a Number of Members of our own Church as far from Agreement with each other in their Opinions on some Points, on which, however, the Church has decided with tolerable Precision, as we find them unanimously disagreeing with Dissenters or Separatists from the Church of *England* upon certain other Topics. And here it may not be foreign to this Part of my Argument, and more particularly after the foregoing Considerations, to ask, why this Diversity of Opinions may not as safely be expressly allowed by the supreme Authority of the State, as left to be enjoyed on the precarious Tenure of Connivance; in apparent Contradiction to the avowed Design of the Imposition, to the Prejudice of Truth, Sincerity, and Freedom of Enquiry, and to the great Unhappiness of many worthy and conscientious Men.

Whatever Arguments in Favour of an Establishment of *human* Formularies of *religious* Faith and Doctrine are acknowledged to owe their Rise and Force to mere political Wisdom, will be found upon Enquiry
to

to have originated from a Source in no Connection with the Gospel of Christ, who built on no such Foundation, and consequently are of illegitimate Descent; and when carried to their utmost Pitch of Authority often make against their very Patrons.

So far as the Gospel of Christ is favorable to the reasonable Liberty of every Man, so far as it inculcates, and is calculated to promote the Profession of Faith in Christ, and the Hopes of a Life to come in all Sincerity and Truth, and to live here in all Godliness and Honesty, so far as it teaches Obedience to all the lawful Commands of Government; just so far is that Gospel pure and unadulterated, favorable to the Interest of the whole and every Member of Civil Society. But no sooner do the Civil Powers interpose to add to, or enforce the Obligations of Christians by human Penalties, than the humble Spirit of the Gospel, and the willing Obedience of the Christian are at an End. The Motives of Duty are no longer Affection and Gratitude to the Redeemer, but abject Fear of Punishment, or sordid Hope of Reward in the present Life, which never fail to disappoint the Civil Magistrate of that Aid, which every wise one desires to derive from Religion. If it were possible to suppose a Society to exist which had Interests opposite to the present Happiness, and future Hopes of its Members, such Society would indeed receive no Benefit from the Gospel of Christ, and might, therefore, consistently enough with its own Views and Interests, deface or even destroy it. And if any Thing like this is the Effect of exclusive Establishments of Religion as now constituted, can the offensive Parts of them be removed too soon*?

Return

* Dr. Campbell, in his Sermon preached before the Synod of Aberdeen, 1771, observes, in Answer to the Question, *What is the Church of Christ?* "If we recur," says he, (p. 59.) "to the New Testament for an Explanation, it is no other than the Community of his faithful Disciples, actuated by his Spirit; for if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Rom. viii. 9.) I shall add one Question more, What is the Interest
" of

Return we now to the Consideration of the Duty of the *Individual*, in Contradistinction to the Duty of the Society to which he belongs, as we may collect it from the Precept of our inspired *Paul*, **LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND.**

No man can justly be said to BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND, until he has exercised his intellectual Faculties in a fair and full Enquiry. And that Conviction which follows Enquiry, will ever be the right Faith to that Individual, however different from the Profession of those among whom he may live, or the Principles of those under whom he may have been educated. Orthodoxy is a Word of very vague and indeterminate Signification; it meaneth one Thing To-day, and another To-morrow; one Thing with the Protestant, another with the Papist, and very wide from the Meaning of either, when used by the Jew or Mahomedan.

Enquiry then should seem the natural Duty of every Man from the Nature of Things. Under the Gospel Dispensation, and as Members of a Protestant Church, we are under the Obligation to make and pursue our Enquiries, or we take up our Christianity and Protestantism with the tacit Reserve of disobeying the Commands of our Lord and Master, when they interfere with the Injunctions of a different Authority, and consequently of acting inconsistently with our Character and

“ of this Church? In the View which our Religion gives of it, it is not their Wealth,
 “ or Rank, or Fame, or even the Security of their Lives and Fortunes; but it is their
 “ Advancement in Faith and Purity. Can I, then, by corrupting one of the Members,
 “ and hazarding the Infection of the Rest, advance the Purity of the Whole? Indeed,
 “ if you mean by the Church, according to the Acceptation of the Word with many,
 “ a certain Order of Men only; and if you mean by their Interest, their lucrative
 “ Offices, Dignity, and Power, and the Credit of those Dogmas on which the Whole
 “ is founded; I shall admit, that the Cause of the Church, in your Sense of the Word,
 “ and the Cause of Virtue, which is the Cause of God, may be as opposite as Truth
 “ and Falsehood, Heaven and Hell.”

Principles,

Principles, as contrasted with those of the Papist, against whose Impositions we pretend to protest.

St. *John* exhorts the Followers of Christ to TRY THE SPIRITS, WHETHER THEY ARE OF GOD*. St. *Luke* highly commends the *Greatness of Mind* in the Bereans, declaring them, as we read it, MORE NOBLE, or of a better Disposition, THAN THOSE OF THESSALONICA, IN THAT THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE so †. St. *Paul* calls upon the Thessalonians to PROVE ALL THINGS, and having so done, to HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD ‡. He bids the Galatians to STAND FAST IN THAT LIBERTY, WHEREWITH CHRIST HAD MADE THEM FREE, AND NOT TO BE ENTANGLED AGAIN WITH THE YOKE OF BONDAGE §. To *Timothy* he writes, BE NOT ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD, NOR OF ME HIS PRISONER ||. And early in his Epistle to the *Romans*, with unshaken Firmness, and undaunted Courage, he declares his own Attachment to and ready Service in the Cause of his Master; I AM READY, says he, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOU THAT ARE AT ROME ALSO: FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION, TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK **.

Let

* 1 John iv. 1. † Acts xvii. 11. and see Bishop *Pearce's* Commentary on the Place.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 21. § Gal. v. 1. || 2 Tim. i. 8. ** Rom. i. 15, 16.

“ It is to the last Degree criminal and dishonourable for a Minister of the Gospel to
 “ conceal the Truth, or in a timid and illiberal Manner to approach it, like *Nicodemus*,
 “ in the *Night*, for *Fear* of the Censures of the World. Hoary and venerable ERROR
 “ would to this Moment have maintained her Throne, and the Empire of Darkness
 “ and Dullness be perpetuated to the End of Time, and there never would have existed
 “ any such Religion as the Christian, any such Characters among Mankind as Martyrs
 “ and Confessors, or any such illustrious *Æras* in the Annals of the World, as religious
 “ Reformations; had wise and good Men ever complimented Priests and Princes with
 “ believing

Let me ask, how can we, as Protestants, justify our Departure even from the MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH *, but by consulting and reading our Bible, primarily maintaining the supreme and exclusive Authority thereof, and thence confronting the Idolatry and Impieties of the Romanists, with the MOST SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, WHEREUNTO WE DO WELL THAT WE TAKE HEED, AS UNTO A LIGHT THAT SHINETH IN A DARK PLACE †? SECRET THINGS, says *Moses*, BELONG TO THE LORD OUR GOD; BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED, BELONG TO US, AND TO OUR CHILDREN FOR EVER ‡.

When we put on the Character of Ministers of a Christian and Protestant Church, it becomes a Consideration of the first Importance to us, how far our respective Engagements admit of any Attempt towards the Removal of these Stumbling-blocks of Offence, and these Impediments to the free Course of the Gospel, with which it was disfigured and incumbered before the Reformation.

To many of our Brethren, respectable for their Abilities as well as Station, and truly amiable in their Dispositions, the previous Engagement to a particular established System, has been thought to preclude all farther Progress in the good and necessary Work of Reformation,

“ believing as they believed, and sacrificed their Understandings at the Shrine of the
 “ popular Superstition. Almighty God hath blessed, and Divine Providence will con-
 “ tinue to give a Blessing and Success to every Attempt of this Kind, to promote ra-
 “ tional Religion, and the sacred Cause of TRUTH, until at last those Things, which
 “ now give just Offence to intelligent and serious Christians, which damp the spirit of
 “ their *public* Devotions, which they ardently, but ineffectually, wish were removed,
 “ will be totally exterminated, and the blessed Gospel in its primæval Purity and Sim-
 “ plicity, free from all human Schemes and corrupt Admixtures, convince the Under-
 “ standing, constitute the Faith, direct the Practice, and ensure the best Interests and
 “ Happiness of the whole World.”—Dr. *Harwood's* Preface to his *five Dissertations*.
 Printed 1772. 8vo.

* Rev. xvii. 14.

† 2 Pet. i. 19.

‡ Deut. xxix. 29.

so nobly begun by our Forefathers. One Writer, indeed, (of some Note in the Controversy, and who was not without his Followers) advanced the very reprehensible Paradox, that " Authority once established must be obeyed." A Jew or a Heathen would thank that Writer for the Concession, and would not fail to improve it to considerable Advantage, when either of them disputed their Faith with the Christian, as would also the Papist when distressed by the irrefragable Arguments of a consistent Protestant Opponent. This Doctrine of indiscriminate Obedience, if as closely followed in Practice as maintained in Theory, would have long since rendered our political Creed as precarious as our religious Faith; it would not only have militated against the essential Obligations of a good Christian, and good Protestant in the one Case, but against those of a good Citizen in the other *.

But further, it may be generally observed that the warmest Friend of the present System would hardly care to adhere to the Expectations
and

* It may not be thought unworthy the Observation of the inquisitive Reader that Dr. Tillotson asserted, in a Sermon on Josh. xxiv. 15. preached at Court the 2d of April, 1680, and which was unexpectedly commanded by the King to be published, that " no Man " without an extraordinary Commission from Heaven, testified by working Miracles as " the Apostles did, ought to affront the established Religion of a Nation, though it be " false, and openly to draw Men off from the Profession of it in Contempt of the " Magistrate and the Law, &c." King Charles II. having slept most Part of the Time while the Sermon was delivered, a Nobleman stepped up to him, as soon as it was over, and said, " 'Tis Pity your Majesty slept; for we had the rarest Piece of *Hobbism* " that ever you heard in your Life." *Od's Fish*, he shall print it then, answered the King, and immediately called the Lord-Chamberlain, and gave him his Command to the Dean to print the Sermon. When it came from the Press, the Dean sent a Copy, as a Present to the justly celebrated Mr. John Howe, who did not only write him a long Letter upon this erroneous Doctrine, but expostulated with him upon it in a friendly Manner, upon which Dr. Tillotson (then Dean of Canterbury) burst into Tears, and frankly acknowledged that it was not to be justified. Dr. Tillotson did afterwards add an explanatory Paragraph, (see *Confessional*, 3d Edit. p. 263—268. Note) but which came short of the Retraction expected by Dr. Patrick (afterwards Bishop of Ely) and which would have decisively confirmed this Anecdote of one of the first Rank among the *English* Prelates, as first given by Dr. Calamy.—It is received, however, without any Reserve

and Requirements of the Formularies of it so far, as to oblige himself to defend them at the Expence of his prior, more important, and more binding Obligation to the Church of Christ. In my own Estimation, our Church, in none of her Stipulations expressly requires Terms so hard upon her Members, or so ruinous to her own Foundations. Ultimately, however, the Reasons for our own personal Conduct, whether they respect our joining in, or objecting to the late Applications for Relief from Burdens grievous to be borne; or the undesirable Alternative of our continuing in, or renouncing our Ministrations under them, must be referred, and are only amenable to the Conscience of every Individual. It is not the Sneers of weak or wicked Men, it is not the Aspersions of the Malicious, or the Cravings of Expectants, that should affect our respective Determinations. WHO ART THOU THAT JUDGEST ANOTHER MAN'S SERVANT? TO HIS OWN MASTER HE STANDETH OR FALLETH *. Our Master is Christ, and he alone our Judge.

It is the Opinion of some of our Brethren, and those not a few, that the Idea of Duty and Attachment to our national Church, does not exclude an Obligation to make known the Blemishes and weaker Parts of its Establishment while we are doing Justice to the Excellencies of it, the better to guard ourselves against the insidious Attacks of our avowed Adversaries, who often come among us only to discover the Nakedness of our Land, and to reproach us for our Partiality. And with this Persuasion, the same Persons considered themselves under the further Obligation respectfully to solicit the Removal of all unscriptural and unedifying Impositions, and the Substitution of the

serve by Dr. Birch, in his *Life of Archbishop Tillotson*, 8vo. 1752. p. 61, &c. See also Mr. Granger's *Biographical History of England*, 8vo. Vol. iii. p. 312. Art. HOWE, and more particularly in Mr. Palmer's *Non-Conformist's Memorial*, Vol. i. p. 414. Art. HOWE. —I cannot pretend to judge upon the Probability of Dr. Balguy's Conversion from *Hobbiſm*, as he has not thought proper to announce the Measure of his Conviction.

* Rom. xiv. 4.

Christian Scriptures alone, as the only legitimate Test of Admission into the Ministry of a Christian and a Protestant Church, and of the liberal Terms of Communion with her. With equal Resolution, equal Judgment and Zeal, it is hoped that the same Men would resolutely have maintained and defended that Barrier which Christianity and Protestantism have jointly placed, as well for the Defence of true Religion, as the Prevention of all foreign Encroachment and Usurpation.

It deserves to be remarked here, however, that there seemed, upon the Whole, to be as little Agreement in the several Reasons assigned for the Continuance of our human Formularies, as is generally found in the Interpretation and Construction of them.

One respects *Antiquity*, another objected the *Danger of Innovations*, a third wished for a *partial and superficial Reform*, far short of the Root of the Grievance, a fourth objected to the *Mode of Application*, a fifth to the *constitutional Impracticability* of any further Alterations.

ANTIQUITY is, indeed, a venerable and respectable Name. But the Gospel in its Simplicity, is of longer standing than any of those Additions which are pretended to have been grafted upon it. Antiquity, if made to refer to any Matter subsequent to the Publication of the Gospel, justifies nothing, which the Light of our own Age informs us is incongruous with, or repugnant to, the Design of planting the Christian Religion in the World, which can only be discovered by recurring to the *Æra* whence it derives its Original; and to be guided herein by any Thing but the original Record, would only lead us into Perplexity, Deception, and Darknes*.

The

* “ That which I complain of is, that we look upon wise Men that lived long ago
 “ with so much Veneration and Mistake, that we reverence them not for having been
 “ wise Men, but that they lived long since.” Bishop Jer. Taylor’s *Liberty of Prophe-*
syng,

THE DANGER OF INNOVATION is an Ecclesiastical Watch-Word of very trifling Importance when used to discourage the Removal of Forms and Ordinances which are confessedly obstructive of Christian Edification, for the Sake of which, surely, something more ought to be hazarded than the Loss of a merely ideal Uniformity; on which the Spirit of the Gospel, blessed be God, lays no such Stress, as to make it an indispensable Condition either of Christian Communion here, or of everlasting Salvation hereafter. St. Paul was not backward to declare, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, in the true Spirit of an Apostle, LET GOD BE TRUE AND EVERY MAN A LIAR *. And this supposed Danger was (we well know and ought to remember with unfeigned Thankfulness) successively set at naught by *Moses* and the Prophets, —by Christ and his Apostles, by *Luther* and his Followers, in Spite of all the interested Clamors of their Opponents.

In Answer to those who have wished for a PARTIAL REFORM, and also have objected to the MODE OF APPLICATION, it will be sufficient to reply, that nothing was thrown in the Way of others of our Brethren who chose to seek their own Relief their own Way. The Experiment was tried by a Body of very learned, ingenious, and worthy Men, and ended in something very like the Conversion of the first Promoter of a late Application to the Cause of the petitioning Clergy †.

fyng, § 8. p. 210. And, indeed, while we respect Men who lived some Ages ago merely on Account of their Knowledge (except in Cases where their Testimony is Evidence of *Facts*,) it is certain that the longer Interval between their Days and our own, the weaker should seem their Discernment, as far as simple Authority is concerned. Agreeably to this Idea is an old Observation, and which hath been frequently repeated, “A Pigmy on a Giant’s Shoulder, can see further than the Giant himself.” See *Daille on the Right Use of the Fathers*, Part 2d, p. 192. and *Bishop Croft’s Naked Truth*, p. 11. printed 1675.

* Rom. iii. 4. † See an excellent Pamphlet generally ascribed to Mr. *Wollaston*, entituled, *Considerations on the State of Subscription to the Articles, and Liturgy of the Church of England, towards the Close of the Year 1773. By a Consistent Protestant.* Printed for *Wilkie*, p. 35—37.

In favor of the CONSTITUTIONAL IMPRACTICABILITY of the Measure, has been alledged a Clause in the Act of Union; and that Act, considered in all its Parts, as an unalterable Compact between the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*, as well with Respect to Religion, as to civil Policy. This Compact is, indeed, unalterable in every Part, which, considered as a public Pledge and mutual Compact, respects the Incroachments of one Kingdom on the other, but no further. In this Sense have some distinguished Lawyers, and other eminent Writers, interpreted this favorite Idea of some Men, and the sheet Anchor of their Opposition, in this Sense it was ably explained in Parliament, and with these agrees the Account of the best contemporary Historian †.

St. Paul says, LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER ‡, and so far as this is applied to Modes of Discipline which encroach not on the Rights of Conscience, all may be well. St. Paul does not appear to have intended more. The civil Magistrate has no Concern with the Religion of his People, so long as Obedience is paid

† The only Law-Authority that I can recollect, at this Time, for the *real* Existence of this Objection, is Sir *William Blackstone*, and who, though long ago confuted by the masterly Pen of Dr. *Furneaux*, in his *Letters* to him (second Edit. 8vo. 1771.) by Dr. *Priestley*, in his *Remarks on some Paragraphs*, and by the Author of *An Objection drawn from the Act of Union, Considered, &c.* (printed for Dilly, 1771.) and occasionally, by certain other learned and ingenious Writers, as also by the Solicitor General, (Mr. *Wedderburne*) in the House of Commons, on *February 6th* 1772,—continues the exceptionable Paragraphs in the *fourth* Edition of the *Commentaries*, which is now before me. Hence, I conclude, guiding my Judgment by my own Digest of their respective Pleadings, that the Question so peremptorily decided by the Commentor, is, while limited to his Work, *coram non Judice*.

The Parliament of *Great Britain* constitute the supreme Legislature of these Kingdoms; by an Act of their collective Body the Grievance is imposed, and by them only it can be constitutionally removed. To them did the Protestant Petitioners apply, but through certain Prejudices and Misapprehensions (of which perhaps this might make one) and Influence of another Sort, which it would be invidious to recite, they were supposed to fail of Success. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

unto

unto him by them in all Things lawfully and constitutionally enacted respecting civil Matters. His Authority is bounded by overt Acts; the Operations of the Mind and the Dictates of Conscience, as they are out of his Province, so are they beyond his Authority. And he is an Enemy to his own Dignity, Peace, and Interest, and the good of his People, when he intermeddles to alter the Terms of Acceptance of a Man with his God, and exposes him to the Opprobrium of grossly prostituting Religion to the most iniquitous Purposes, and reducing it to a mere Engine of his secular Government, than which nothing can be a greater Abuse of it.

To conclude. The Church of Christ will survive its Corruptions and Incumbrances, insomuch that even THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT *, if Holy Writ saith true. Under this faithful Saying, I trust and am confident that, in the fulness of Time, Christianity will not only find a full Toleration, but have its free Course among Christians, by Means of Freedom and liberal Examination; and likewise, that the Liberty of interpreting and preaching God's written Word will be allowed and encouraged among sincere and serious Christians of all Denominations; and that the Disciples of our Common Lord and Master will practically consider him, not only as the AUTHOR, but the FINISHER OF THEIR FAITH †. In the mean Time, let us remember the Exhortation of *Paul* to the Romans, to MARK THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS AND OFFENCES CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH THEY HAD LEARNED; AND TO AVOID THEM ‡; and the prophetic Language of Jesus, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT THAT OFFENCES WILL COME, and more particularly the admonitory Close of them, BUT WOE UNTO HIM THROUGH WHOM THEY COME §. Not forgetting that Offences more than equally criminal may arise from the undue Exertion of Authority, as well as from Opposition to established Authority, exercised out of its proper Limits.

* Matt. xvi. 18.
and Luke xvii. 1.

† Heb. xii. 2.

‡ Rom. xvi. 17.

§ Matt. xviii. 7.

The Testimony of a good Conscience will rise superior to all the Revilings and unjust Reproaches of a sinful and adulterous Generation, and far more than compensate for all the Sacrifices of worldly Interests which we may be called upon, in the Course of our Probation, to make at the Altar of Truth. If any of us should be called upon to SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN, LET US NOT BE ASHAMED; BUT LET US GLORIFY GOD ON THIS BEHALF *. Highly commendable and happy are those who act with Sincerity from their respective Convictions, and who have previously done themselves so much Justice, as to have bestowed all necessary Enquiry; but that Servant who shall have wilfully hidden his Talent, will not be less accountable, in the Event, than he who shall have wilfully misapplied it. If we take to ourselves the Characters of MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD, let us not for the Sake of God and his Christ, for the Sake of those of whom we take the Oversight, for the Sake of ourselves, let us not forget, that IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL †.

Let Temper and Moderation distinguish us in all our Differences through our Christian Warfare as the Marks of our Discipleship, seeing that Love and mutual Charity are the principal Characteristics of a Gospel-Spirit. THOUGH I SPEAK, saith the Apostle of the Gentiles, WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM BECOME AS SOUNDING BRASS, OR A TINKLING CYMBAL. And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing ‡. Whatever be our Faith, LET US ADD, saith St. Peter, TO OUR FAITH VIRTUE; AND TO VIRTUE KNOWLEDGE; AND TO KNOWLEDGE TEMPERANCE; AND TO TEMPERANCE PATIENCE; AND TO PATIENCE GODLINESS; AND TO GODLINESS BROTHERLY

* 1 Pet. iv. 16.

† 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, &c.

KINDNESS; AND TO BROTHERLY KINDNESS CHARITY. FOR IF THESE THINGS BE IN US, AND ABOUND, THEY MAKE US THAT WE SHALL NEITHER BE BARREN, NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST *. And yet, after all, we must further remember that we are not to be supine or negligent, but to stand fast in our Christian Liberty, as well as our Christian Faith, and be diligent and watchful over both. We are exhorted to be GOOD SOLDIERS as well as GOOD SERVANTS of Jesus Christ; and earnestly to CONTEND FOR as well as to PREACH THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS †. And in the Midst thereof, we are to MAKE OUR MODERATION KNOWN UNTO ALL MEN ‡.

Finally, my Brethren, let us, however thus differing in Sentiment, agree in those Things which are first needful. Let us respect our several Congregations as Flocks committed to our Care, of whom we have taken the Oversight, NOT BY CONSTRAINT BUT WILLINGLY; NOT FOR FILTHY LUCRE BUT OF A READY MIND; NEITHER AS BEING LORDS OVER GOD'S HERITAGE BUT BEING EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK §. LET OUR CONVERSATION BE AS IT BECOMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE MIND, STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL; AND IN NOTHING TERRIFIED BY OUR ADVERSARIES: WHICH IS TO THEM AN EVIDENT TOKEN OF PERDITION, BUT TO US OF SALVATION, AND THAT OF GOD ||. Let us be instant in Season, and out of Season in promoting every good Word and Work; and like the good Samaritan, attend to the Condition of our weak and spiritually wounded Brethren, and not like the Priest or the Levite pass by on the other Side. Let us, in few Words, be NO MORE CHILDREN TOSSED TO AND FRO, AND CARRIED ABOUT WITH EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE, AND BY THE SLEIGHT OF MEN, AND CUNNING CRAFTI-

* 2 Pet. i. 5—8. † 2 Tim. ii. 3. Jude 3. ‡ Phil. iv. 5. § 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. || Phil. i. 27, 28.

NESS, WHEREBY THEY LIE IN WAIT TO DECEIVE; BUT SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE, THAT WE MAY GROW UP UNTO HIM IN ALL THINGS, WHICH IS THE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST *. If it be possible, let us NOT ONLY BE ALMOST, BUT ALTOGETHER SUCH AS PAUL †. Let us be such, as to be entitled to be numbered among those that KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND THE FAITH OF CHRIST ‡.

NOW UNTO HIM WHO HATH POWER TO STABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL AND PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST. TO GOD ONLY WISE, BE GLORY, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, FOR EVER §. Amen.

* Eph. iv. 14, 15. † Acts xxvi. 29. ‡ Rev. xiv. 12. § Rom. xvi. 25, 27.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Dedication, Page vi. Line 5. for persuaded read perswaded.

Page 8. Note, Line 7. for Advocates read Advocate.

— 15. Line 3. Apostle Paul.

— 22. Note, Line 10. for Commentor read Commentator.

Note omitted, *Page 19. Line 3.* after the Words “ Church of Christ.” It should seem that every consistent Protestant would wish to refer himself on all Occasions to the Bible ONLY, as a never failing Barrier against the Devices of Men, and all equivocal Defences of them, or hazard the very humiliating Confession of Pope *Alexander the III.* Sir *John Harrington*, in a Letter to *Henry Prince of Wales* (1609.) acquaints him, that “ every Day during that Lent, Friar *Fulgentio*, of the Order of Servites, preached the Word of God purely and without Mixture. The Pope, hearing of the Sermons of this honest Man, sent for the *Venetian Ambassador*, and told him, that he had been informed, that one *Fulgentio* had preached Doctrines contrary to the Catholic Faith. The Ambassador answered, that he preached nothing but the Word of God. So I understand, replied the Pope, but do not you know, that to preach the Gospel and the Word of God, is to destroy the Catholic Religion ?” See *Birch’s Life of Hen. Prince of Wales*, 8vo. 1760. p. 167.